

The Letters From My Heart by FangirlingStrangerThings

Series: Mileven Week 2018 [1]

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: F/M

Language: English

Characters: Eleven | Jane Hopper, Jim "Chief" Hopper, Mike Wheeler

Relationships: Eleven | Jane Hopper/Mike Wheeler

Status: Completed

Published: 2018-11-06

Updated: 2018-11-06

Packaged: 2022-04-23 02:56:16

Rating: General Audiences

Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 1

Words: 5,809

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

Mileven Week Day 1 Theme - Long Distance.

For 353 days Mike calls to El.

His heart hoping even just for a sign that she's out there, that she missed him too. That she's yearning as well for the love they have lost.

El is crumbling every time she watches Mike calling out for her. Hopper knows he's days away from El being captured if she keeps trying to leave the cabin to see Mike.

He has to do something. Something that will work as an outlet for El to outpour her emotions and feelings for Mike.

"Remember when we started history lessons and I told you about the different world wars?"

El nodded in understanding but didn't speak, still sniffing as she tried to calm her breathing.

"Okay so in the war, soldiers went months and months without communication from their family and partner."

"What did they do?" El hiccupped, wiping her wet cheeks with the sleeve of her soft cream and pink pyjamas.

"They wrote letters to each other. They wrote about how they missed each other and what they had been doing."

For 353 days El writes to Mike.

The Letters From My Heart

Author's Note:

HAPPY STRANGER THINGS DAY! And HAPPY MILEVEN WEEK!

I am taking part in the Mileven Week themes, which is when the admins of Mileven Week on Tumblr have chosen a theme for writers and artists to use to inspire stories and art.

Today's theme is Long Distance.

I have tried to keep it canon for this first one and ease my way in. I hope you enjoy it! :-D

The Letters From My Heart

Day 1

The words hitting Mike's ears seemed to blur, like an echo from another room. He was sat at the dining room table, his eyes glazed over as he stared through the window, the usually dark yard lit up by search lights glowing through the night.

"Why didn't you think you could *talk* to me Michael?" his mom was asking in a wavering voice, both of his parents sat across the table, having hurried him into the dining room the moment the FBI had left the house. "We could have helped you."

"*Helped?*" Ted grumbled in surprise, turning to look at his wife. "He was harbouring a *Russian Spy*."

"She's *not* a Russian Spy..." Mike whispered through gritted teeth, his eyes still on the window. His mind was playing tricks on him. Had he

really seen El stood in the living room window? Her eyes full of sorrow as she stared right back at him.

"Was this because of Will?" Karen pressed on. "Honey I know you were upset but bringing a girl like that into this house was dangerous..."

"She's *not* dangerous," Mike spat out, his eyes glowering with anger as he finally tore his gaze from the window and stared at his startled parents.

"You're saying the FBI are *lying* son?" Ted laughed in exasperation, shaking his head as if the mere thought of the government being corrupt was ludicrous.

"Yes, they're lying!" Mike shouted, standing up from his seat, his body trembling with grief, pain and adrenaline. "S-She...she was a scared girl who only hurt anyone to protect us, to protect *me*!"

"What do you mean she protected you Michael?" Karen asked quietly, her perfectly neat eyebrows lowered in concern as her eyes danced over her son's broken face.

Mike huffed in frustration and shook his head, his fists clenched at his sides. "It doesn't matter," he said bitterly. "You wouldn't believe me anyway. You're too busy believing the FBI!"

He turned on his heel and stormed off, feeling the heat of his anger pouring off him in waves.

"We are not done here son!" Ted shouted out just as Mike raised his left hand and gestured with his middle finger in his parent's direction.

"Michael!" Karen gasped in shock.

"You're grounded!" Ted called more harshly than he had ever spoken before.

Mike didn't look back, his face like thunder as he rolled his eyes. Grounded, yeah right. As if he ever listened to his parents' rules.

He stomped down the stairs of the basement, purposefully being as

loud as possible, his dirty sneakers smacking against the wood. His heart was racing and felt lodged in his throat, he barely knew what he was doing as he headed towards the blanket fort.

His amber eyes lingered on the sleeping bag and pillow where El had slept for most of the week and his stomach twisted with pain.

"Good bye Mike"

Even just replaying her final words in his mind was too painful and he flinched, turning his head away from the fort as a tear slid down his face. His chest was heaving with grief and confusion. He had seen her destroy the Demogorgon, sacrificing herself in the process. But he had seen her tonight, he was so sure. Her silhouette in the tall window still flickering in his eyes.

If only he had a way of checking. A way of knowing that she was still...

He couldn't say the words, but his resolve built inside of his heart as he hurried over to his backpack, rooting in it until he pulled out his Super Com with shaky hands.

Mike's gaze nervously flickered back to the blanket fort and for a moment he just stared at it, imagining her sat there, legs crossed wearing his clothes and her attention focused on the Super Com as she tried to prove Will was still alive. Guilt riddled through Mike's veins when he remembered the two times within that week that he had shouted at her. When he told her that Lucas was right about her and that she had lied. His breath stuttered in pain and numbly he made his way over to the blanket fort, crawling into the space and crossing his own legs, mimicking El's position.

It took him a few moments to summon the courage to even turn the Super Com on. Scared of what he might hear, scared of hearing *nothing*.

Mike inhaled sharply through his nose and exhaled a deep nervous breath as he closed his eyes tight and pressed down the speaker button on the radio. "El?...El are you out there? It's...it's me, Mike..."

There was dead silence on the radio and Mike sighed as he opened his eyes and tried again. "El *please*. I...I need to know if I really saw you tonight...or if it's all in my head." He tried to swallow down the lump in his throat. "Just please...come home if you can. I-I'll wait for you and get some Eggos for you a-and I'll speak to my mom, she'll understand. And maybe...maybe we can still go to the Snow Ball?"

The continued static tugged and cracked at Mike's hope, his chest feeling incredibly tight as the exhaustion and devastation of the night hit him. His eyesight blurred with unshed tears as his sense of gravity shifted, his head hitting the pillow and his body curling in on itself.

*The cliff. The jump. El's determined face as she saved him. Mike's stomach swooping with awe. Holding her close, convincing her she wasn't a monster. The bathroom. "Still pretty?" whispered in his heart. "Yeah pretty . **Really** pretty." The mad flutter of butterflies as she moved closer, her bright eyes pulling him in. Running from the bad man. Hiding in the bus. The pool. El cold and scared as she lay her head on his shoulder. Showing her the cafeteria. Asking her to the Snow Ball. Trying to explain exactly what she meant to him . **Kissing** her. His body exploding with happiness with just how perfect it had felt.. The lab. The Demogorgon. "Eleven **stop** !" His back hitting the cabinet, his eyes filled with tears as she turned back to look at him, all her dreams shattered within her hazel eyes. "Good bye Mike" His heart **breaking** .*

Day 47

The static crackled in her ears, her mind focusing on finding the one person she needed to see over the billions of people in the world. His voice started to break through the darkness, his smooth and gentle tone easing the ache in her heart as El finally opened her eyes.

There he was in, in their fort just as he had been every night. El had been with him in the void since day 3 when she had finally found some food and had the energy to try and reach out to him in the darkness.

She remembered how the night of the Snow Ball was the first time

she had seen Mike *really* cry, his voice wavering between wrecked sobs as he apologised about breaking his promise. It had broken El and she had never needed him more. But she had no energy, she couldn't communicate with him, only watch his pain as her own heart cried out.

El's hazel eyes now flooded with concern as she took Mike in, noticing the way he was hunched over, flinching now and again as he grabbed his side. There was a bruise forming under his eye and a cut to his lip. El's mouth parted in fear, her eyes widening as she wondered who or what had done this to Mike. Anger started to bubble in her stomach, *no one* hurt Mike.

"El?" Mike croaked tiredly, his face forlorn and his mop of dark hair lowered like he had given up. "It's day 47, 8.52pm. I had a bad day today...a *really* bad day." He was mumbling and quiet and El shuffled closer on her knees, barely blinking or breathing as she tried to listen avidly to Mike.

"Troy asked where my freak girlfriend was," Mike closed his eyes, wincing slightly from the pain of the bruising. "And I just *lost* it El. I wanna say I gave as good as I got but look at me..." Mike snorted in frustration and misery, shaking his head. "I have no idea why you even liked me. I'm weak, I can't even stick up for my..."

Whatever he was going to say he cut himself off, taking a shaky deep breath. "Lucas and Dustin think I should stop looking for you now... but I just *can't* El. I know you're out there, just *please* give me a sign." Mike sounded so pained, every word laced in misery as he opened his eyes, having no idea he was staring straight at El, tears running down her cheeks.

She jolted slightly when Mike suddenly turned his head, a look of agitation flickering at his handsome features. "I'm busy!" he shouted, his voice breaking slightly. El couldn't hear the response but she watched as Mike rolled his eyes, his face stony and his jaw tight. "*Fine*, just one minute!"

He stumbled slightly bringing the Super Com back up to his mouth and his face was one more remorse and sad. "I'm sorry El I've gotta go. Mom is making me do a load of chores because of the fight." He

shook his head in exasperation, "but that doesn't matter. Just know that I won't give up on you."

Mike lowered the aerial and carefully placed the Super Com back onto the pillows before shouting, "coming!" and stomping out of sight, his shape disappearing into the darkness as El returned to her bedroom.

She ripped the black tie away from her eyes and blinked as the warmth of her room came into view. El exhaled a deep breath, her chest aching and her fingers still itching with the need to reach out and touch Mike.

She barely slept that night, her eyes glazed over and unfocused as Hopper read to her, his usually soothing and deep voice unable to calm her as she thought about the injuries Mike had gained trying to protect her. Her thoughts flickered to that mouth breather Troy and she worked her jaw tightly, her eyes narrowing slightly. *No one* got away with hurting Mike.

Ten minutes after Hopper had left the cabin the next day, El rose from the couch, leaving her Soap Operas behind for one day as she unlocked the door with her mind, only a small amount of fear of the outside world humming in her body as she left the cabin and set off through the woods.

She was going to find Troy and she was going to make him *pay*.

A branch snapped and El whirled around, coming face to face with Hopper who looked just as shocked to see her as she was to see him. For a moment there was silence, but then the Chief blinked and hurried over to her, taking her arm and gently tugging her back towards the cabin.

"What are you doing out here?" Hopper whispered in a panicked voice as his blue eyes quickly shot around the woods looking for any potential threats.

El let herself be led but she was getting angry, feeling the emotions building in her gut. "You went to work," she stated, frustrated that he had caught her leaving.

"I just got to the truck and realised I forgot my hat, what's your excuse?" Hopper shot back, his initial concern now becoming something more defensive and irritated.

"I was going to kill the mouth breather Troy."

Hopper's bushy eyebrows flew up his creased forehead and he blinked rapidly, before pausing, making El stop too. "I *hope* you're joking."

When El merely shrugged, her whole frame tense as she avoided his eyes, Hopper sighed heavily. "You can't kill anyone kid...okay maybe I'll allow an exception for those idiots at the lab if you're in danger. But it's *illegal*. Remember that word? It means it's not allowed, that you would be locked up again."

El looked down at the forest floor, the earth damp from the bitter frost of the late December weather. "He hurt Mike," she muttered, her voice croaking with pain.

Hopper watched her for a moment and poised his lips in deep thought, sadness in his eyes as he watched El feeling so helpless. He removed his hand off her upper arm and moved his palms to her shoulders instead. El slowly and carefully looked up at Hopper, her eyes cautious.

"I'll check in on Mike, okay? I'll say I had a concerned teacher mentioning his injuries. If I think his injuries are enough to bring that Troy kid down the station, then that's what I'll do."

El nodded slowly, her whole face incredibly tight, like she was trying to hold herself together and it was taking all of her energy. "I miss him," she choked out as a tear escaped her lower lashes and dropped down her pale cheek.

Hopper heaved a heavy breath and looked into El's bambi eyes, feeling guilt mix in with the determination to keep her safe. He knew she wanted to see the Wheeler boy, it was obvious how much he meant to her. But letting El see Mike was exposure to the outside world and they couldn't risk it. Hopper tried desperately to think of something to say that might comfort El.

He looked at her, blue eyes meeting hazel eyes and he said, "*soon*. You will see him soon."

Day 94

"El are you there? It's Mike again. It's day 94, 7.40pm. And I'm here, I'm *still* here." Mike said with a weak smile.

There was something different about today El pondered as she knelt down in front of Mike. He seemed *tidier*. His hair not as messy, but silky like it had just been washed. El longed to know what it smelt like. Mike was wearing some kind of shirt with buttons down the front, smart like the shirts Hopper owned. He was playing with the hem of his black jeans and El marvelled at how he was getting taller, the edge of his jeans now riding up past his ankles when he sat down.

There was a plate of Eggos placed on his right side and a sealed red card. El looked at it with curiosity before Mike spoke again, all of her attention going straight back onto his face which seemed slimmer. Not in a bad way of course. His jaw line was becoming more pronounced and El couldn't stop looking at his sharp cheek bones or how his thinner face made his lips even bigger. The memory of kissing those lips hit El's heart so forcefully that she gasped, her sharp breath echoing in the void.

"Today is, um, Valentine's Day..." Mike said coughed awkwardly as he rubbed at the back of his neck. "It's a day where you show the person you lo-...the person you *like* how much they mean to you." El stared in awe as Mike's pale freckled cheeks blushed pink.

"Pretty," El whispered in captivation.

Mike's eyes widened, and he stared at the Super Com having heard a slight change in the static. "El?!" he asked with excitement, his smile bright and his chest heaving with suspense.

El bit into her lower lip painfully, *knowing* she couldn't say anything.

She had promised Hopper that when she visited Mike in the void she would only observe him. She clenched her fists, her nails digging into her palms, grounding her as she looked away from Mike for the moment, not able to see the disappointment flicker back into his handsome features.

When El heard a sigh escape his lips she hesitantly looked back at him, finding his head dipped down so she couldn't look into his eyes. Perhaps that was for the best. Every time she saw him crumble it broke her down piece by piece.

Mike took a deep inhale and exhale and then moved the Super Com back to his mouth. "If you had been here maybe...maybe we could have spent Valentine's day together. I still um, I still really like you El. You're the only girl I'd want to celebrate today with."

Tears started to prick at El's eyes and her lower lip wobbled as she watched Mike, wanting nothing more than to be by his side, to spend *every day* with him. It seemed like an impossible dream the more days that passed between them.

Mike laughed, quickly and sharply as he sniffled and rubbed the sleeve of his shirt against his eyes. "Will asked me today if you were my girlfriend. I didn't even know what to say because I know you didn't know what girlfriend meant...but El you *always* understood." Mike heaved a sigh and shook his head, "I just wish you were here. I wish we could have spent Valentine's together."

His wet amber eyes flickered anxiously to the red sealed card and his Adam's Apple bobbed. "I um...I got you a Valentine's card. I won't read it out *loud* or anything. I'll keep it here for you...obviously under the pillow otherwise Lucas and Dustin will *definitely* think I've lost it."

El eyed the card with a desperate desire, her fingers itching to open it, to know what Mike had written for her. Her own frustration was thrumming in her pulse and all she wanted to do was *scream*.

"I would have got you a present," Mike said looking around at his belongings. "But I couldn't exactly give you flowers and um, I didn't really know what you'd like. There's Rory of course. I could have given you my Rubix cube, but I haven't seen it in months."

Mike thought of something else to say, rolling his plump lower lip between his teeth. "Oh! Hopper visited me again. He said there wasn't any more news of you, but I know that can't be true. Because you're out there, I...I *know* you are."

El sighed quietly watching intently as Mike's smooth brow furrowed in thought. "I think *Hopper* stole my Rubix cube..." He laughed gently in confusion and El felt a smile curve on her lips, her eyes sparkling and the wings of hummingbirds flapping in her stomach. He rarely laughed or truly smiled, but when he *did*, for that moment everything felt like it would be okay.

Mike's smile slowly disappeared as El knew it would and he sighed, his eyes glazing over once more. "I just miss you El. I miss you more than I ever thought was possible," he admitted as his eyes flickered around the blanket fort that he sat in. "Sometimes...sometimes I feel like it was all a dream. The Upside Down, the Demogorgon, *you*."

"I just wish I could see you," Mike whispered, his words too painful to be uttered any louder. "I wish I could see you smiling or laughing, and..." he swallowed nervously, his breath catching in his throat before a flickering fire of courage like up his amber eyes. "I wish I could tell you that I'm in lo – "

"Mike!"

Dustin's voice made both Mike and El jump, breaking the moment completely as Mike's cheeks flushed deep red. "What are you doing on this channel?"

"What are you doing radioing me this late?" Mike bit back, frustration and embarrassment creeping up his neck.

Dustin snorted in amusement, "Mike it's like 8pm..."

"Well I was busy," Mike snapped as he abruptly turned off the Super Com and threw it to the side where it hit the pillow. His dark eyes went to the Eggos and the card and his jaw set, "stupid. I'm so stupid," he muttered to himself, clambering out of the fort while El watched on in despair. Her cheeks warm with tears and her fragile heart breaking open.

Within seconds of ripping off the black tie El was at Hopper's side where he was trying to fix one of the kitchen cabinets, a cigarette hanging out of his mouth.

"Now," El stated, her shoulder shaking from her sobs. "I need to see Mike *now*."

Hopper almost dropped his cigarette at her demand, the broken look on her face making his own heart ache. He hesitantly pulled the cigarette out of his mouth, stubbing it out in the tray and standing up.

"El," he tried to say softly, knowing that the girl he was coming to think of as a daughter was going through immeasurable pain. Pain that was deep rooted in her before Mike Wheeler was even on the scene.

"You will see him soon – "

"NO!" El shouted, her chin wobbling and her cries making her breathless. Hopper's blue eyes nervously glanced over at the shelves noticing how their contents was rattling. "I need to see him **NOW**."

Hopper bit his lip wishing he had let Joyce in on this secret, knowing that when it came to matters of the heart he wasn't exactly an open book, and he *never* said the right thing. Hopper nervously brushed his hand across his mouth, scratching against his stubble.

He lowered himself onto the floor so that he was eye level with the crying girl and tried again to say *something* comforting. "El this won't be forever, I can promise you that. You've got to think of this as like a...long distance relationship."

"What does that mean?" El sniffled, hiccupping slightly as she wiped at her wet red eyes.

Hopper was thankful that he seemed to have grabbed her attention and hurried to speak. "Remember when we started history lessons and I told you about the different world wars?"

El nodded in understanding but didn't speak, still sniffing as she tried to calm her breathing.

"Okay so in the war, soldiers went *months* and *months* without communication from their family and partner."

"What did they do?" El hiccupped, wiping her wet cheeks with the sleeve of her soft cream and pink pyjamas.

"They wrote letters to each other. They wrote about how they missed each other and what they had been doing."

"I can write letters to Mike?" El asked hopefully while Hopper hesitated.

"You wouldn't be able to *send* them to him El it's too dangerous," when he saw the broken expression flood back in her eyes he quickly added. "Not yet anyway. But you could write them, and when you two do reunite, which you will, then he can read them all."

El slowly lifted her wet and vulnerable eyes to look at Hopper, hesitation written all over her expression as she slowly whispered, "promise?"

Hopper smiled sadly and nodded his head, "promise kid." El took him by surprise doing something he would have never expected of her, hugging him. He inhaled sharply, completely stunned by her move before slowly hugging her back, his heart in his throat as tears pricked at the corners of his eyes. He shut his eyes, realising how long it had been since he had a hug from a daughter.

"Here you go kid," Hopper said a little while later, handing El over a pad of paper and a pen. She was tucked up in bed, Mike's stolen Rubik Cube hooked under her arm as she reached for the paper. She stared down at it and frowned, "I can't write..." she mumbled.

Hopper laughed kindly, more surprised by her words than anything else. "*Of course* you can write, we've been doing lessons for months now."

El shook her head, "I can't write good...it won't be...*pretty*."

The smile wiped off Hopper's face and he saw the vulnerability in El's eyes, saw the way she wanted to impress Mike, how she wanted to be like any other girl her age. But she was different, she was *special*, and

she needed to know that.

"Kid," Hopper said with a gentle smile. "Mike won't care what your handwriting looks like. He'll just be so happy with whatever you give him."

El looked down at the blank paper again and smiled hesitantly, sweetly. She bit her lip and glanced back at Hopper. "Before a letter we need to make a card," she spoke seriously, nodding her head as if to confirm her words.

Hopper frowned in confusion. "A card?"

El smiled sheepishly and looked back at the paper, "a *Valentine's* card."

"Good lord..." Hopper mumbled to himself.

Day 103

"I feel like there's so much I want to ask you. Like I don't even know what your favourite colour is, or if you would like blueberry Eggos or chocolate chip."

Mike,

I eat Eggos if I don't break the rules. There are so many rules. You never gave me rules.

My favourite colour is yellow. It reminds me of the sun. It is bright and warm and makes me think of you. Pink is pretty too. I miss my pretty dress, but I miss you more.

Soon. Hopper says soon.

El

Day 140

"I got in trouble today for writing your name in the bathroom stalls at school. People write so much crap in there that I thought I should write something meaningful. I don't care that my parents grounded me. I haven't forgotten about you El. I'm *still* here, I still want you to come home..."

Mike,

I asked Hopper to tell your parents they were wrong for being mean to you. He said that what you did was vandalism and that you deserved grounding. I threw a chair at him and now I'm grounded too.

I want to be home with you.

El

Day 162

"It's my birthday today El. The boys got me comics and my parents got me an Atari to play games on. But I only wanted you. I kept hoping you'd appear. I'm sorry, I'm not angry at you I *swear*. I just...I just want you back."

Mike,

Hopper told me what birthday meant. He seemed sad when I asked and now I can't stop crying because I want to be with you on your birthday. I

am sorry I am not there with you. Sometimes I think you know I'm sat with you but then you don't believe yourself and you walk away.

I can't wait until the day when I can stop you walking away.

Happy birthday Mike.

El

Day 232

"El are you there? *Please* just give me a sign. I saw Hopper again today and he said there still isn't any news. I feel like he's lying sometimes, he just looks guilty. And I feel paranoid because does he know something I don't? Does he know you're de – no I can't even say it..."

Mike,

I screamed at Hopper. He says soon but he doesn't mean it. He is a liar Mike and friends don't lie. I want to be home with you, but he says it isn't safe. Is he lying to me? I learnt the word trust today. He says I should trust him.

I trust you.

El

Day 300

"I can't believe it's been 300 days without you El. I still dream about you, I still think about you l-leaving and...and sometimes I dream about our kiss. Did you know that is what I did in the cafeteria?

I kissed you El because I like you. I still really, *really* like you."

Mike,

I really like you too. In my soap operas they called it love. I looked it up in my dictionary and it said, 'a strong feeling of deep affection for somebody/something'. I think that better describes how I feel about you more than like.

But then people in my soap operas say they love each other, but then they go and kiss someone else. I couldn't do that to you Mike. I only want to kiss you. I dream of our kiss too.

El

Day 353

"It's day 353. I had a bad day today, I don't know why. I guess I wish you were here...I mean, we all do. If you're out there, *please*...just give me a sign."

"Mike?"

"Eleven?"

Mike,

I miss you. I miss you so much.

I don't care what Hopper says. I am going to see you tomorrow. It's going to be okay, you won't need to feel sad anymore.

I'm coming home Mike. I love you.

El

The door to the Byers house opened with a loud creak, the room filled with racing hearts and adrenaline fuelled veins as they all prepared to face the Demodogs. Mike knows his weapon of a candle stick is going to be no match against the monsters, he can hardly think straight, his heart crying, wishing he could have seen El *one more time...*

And then his dark world explodes with colour as Mike stares at the girl who had stolen his heart. Watching for a moment in complete shock as she stands, dominating the scene, her beautiful and more mature face filled with courage.

Mike's moving without barely being conscious of it and then their eyes lock, making eye contact for the first time since she had turned to tell him a heart-breaking good bye.

He can barely hear past the erratic pounding of his heart and the mad fluttering of butterflies in his stomach. His lips are slightly parted as he gets closer to her, his eyes wide and brimmed with tears. Is she real? Is he dreaming right now? Or did he die, and this is heaven?

But as he sees El's choice of clothing and the blood running down from her nostril, he knows this has to be real. She's *aged*. She *alive*.

"Eleven," Mike barely whispers, completely breathless and overwhelmed.

"Mike," El chokes before they are in each other's arms, holding onto each other so tightly it would probably be painful if they weren't so overcome with emotion. Mike can hear El sobbing against him, her chest vibrating with every breath. She real, she *alive*. He can't believe it.

Mike holds El even closer because he *never* wants to let her go again, but he needs her to know the words of his heart. He pulls back ever so slightly, but keeps her within his hold, wanting to feel her. Warm, solid and alive.

"I never gave up on you," Mike croaks, tears streaming in his eyes. El gasps through her own tears and smiles, because they are reunited *finally* and it's everything they wanted.

"I called you every night," Mike says almost proudly, his smile so wide it creases his wet cheeks. "Every night for – "

"353 days."

Mike's breath stutters in his throat as he stares down at El, his eyes widening in awe, shock and confusion.

She looks at him softly, her hazel eyes swimming with tears but a gentleness and love in her expression.

"I heard."

February 14th, 1985

"What is *that*?" Mike chuckled with amusement from the couch in the cabin, as he watched El levitate a box from her bedroom. His eyes followed its path to where it landed delicately on the coffee table in front of him.

It was Valentine's day and after a lot of begging and an embarrassing talk between Hopper and Mike about "no funny business", the couple had been allowed to spend the afternoon together.

El had all but pushed Hopper out of the cabin the moment Mike had arrived after school, his backpack laden with gifts and bouquet of red roses in his hands.

"Okay, okay I'm going," Hopper grumbled as he walked down the porch steps. "But I'll be back in four hours. You better behave Wheeler!" Mike had blushed but nodded his head obediently.

The moment Hopper had disappeared within the woods Mike turned

to El, a grin curved on his lips as he cupped her soft cheeks and leaned down to kiss her. She reached up as well because he was getting *so tall* and met him half way.

They both smiled into the kiss, El's arms going around his strong neck and Mike's hands moving to her waist. The feeling of kissing Mike was addictive to El, sweeter than Eggos and more powerful than a promise. While for Mike it felt like he had no hold on gravity, like he was literally floating from how happy and whole he was every time El was in his arms.

So now when Mike looked at the box and realised there was hundreds of sealed letters with his name on, all in El's adorable handwriting, he felt his breath stutter and his lips part in astonishment.

El sat down next to him, looking pleased with herself but there was a slight anxiety at the edge of her eyes that Mike noticed as he stared back at her.

She reached for his hand, their fingers immediately entwining like two perfect puzzle pieces. "You called me for 353 days. And I *wrote* to you for 353 days."

Mike continued to gaze at her, stunned and overwhelmed while El tentatively bit into her lower lip. "I only stopped 12 days ago," she confessed with a small smile.

"El," Mike croaked out, his face still filled with awe as he looked between his girlfriend and the 353 sealed cards. He didn't know what to say, but he hesitantly reached for one.

El curled up into his side, Mike immediately putting his arm around her, cocooning her in his loving embrace as together they opened the first envelope. Mike didn't even realise he was shaking until El's warm palm gently pressed over the back of his hand. He looked at her, finding her eyes immediately.

They were so beautiful her eyes. Golden hazel, warm and loving. Something that he didn't think he was ever going to be able to look at again. He never thought he would get this opportunity, never realised

how desperately she had wanted to see him too.

Mike leaned forward, their foreheads brushing together as their eyes fluttered closed. "I love you El, more than anything."

El smiled softly, "I love you too Mike. Much more than Eggos and Soap Operas..."

Mike laughed, his laugh now filled with happiness and contentment. It still made El smile and it still filled her heart with warmth and her stomach with hummingbirds.

She settled back into his embrace and through the next few hours, they read through the letters together. Sometimes laughing, sometimes crying. Other times smiling and sometimes just needing to kiss, to show how desperately they loved each other. That the struggle of what Hopper had called a long distance relationship had been worth it.

They were together now, and with a shared smile and hopeful glint in their gazes, they knew this was only the beginning of their love story.

Author's Note:

Okay I REALLY enjoyed writing this! It just felt very cathartic, like I needed it after season 2.

I hope you enjoyed it too. Please let me know your thoughts, whatever they are!

I'll be back with tomorrow's theme of 'Fate' and a new one shot :-D